1: Jenness--171 (1913-16) 1922 Copper Eskimo
116, 761

"Melancholy thoughts of death seem to be always hovering in the penumbra of the Eskimos' minds. Especially is this true of the older people, for the young, here as elsewhere, are little troubled by its imminence. During the summer of 1915, when the natives were formulating their plans for the future, even though it might be for but a month ahead, Ikpakhuak or Higilak would often say 'Granting that we are still alive,' and add 'Evil shades are constantly assailing us.' Not infrequently, too, some such expression as 'People are continually dying here' would fall from their lips. Yet in their minds there seemed to be no anxious dread of death weighing them down, no passionate clinging to life, only a profound resignation and melancholy calmness in the face of the inevitable issue. Generally they lowered the voice and assumed a mournful tone when speaking of dead relatives or friends, though occasionally one heard the remark, half jest, half earnest, that 'The foxes have eaten so-and-so,' or 'So-and-so's remains retained no semblance of a man.' They seldom mentioned the dead by name, but seemed rather to try to forget them, as though they would fain banish every unpleasant memory from their minds."

1: Jenness--173-174 (1913-16) 1922 Copper Eskimo
116, 761, 828

"Tales of people dying and coming to life again are so common among these Eskimos that one is almost tempted to believe that catalepsy may not be at all infrequent. In the majority of cases, of course, the story has arisen from the difficulty of distinguishing unconsciousness of an invalid from death. Milukkattak told me that her grandfather died on the trail one day. His sons wrapped him in his sleeping bag, laid all his possessions on the ground beside him, and went on and made camp. In the midst of their weeping the old man suddenly appeared with his sleeping bag still wrapped round his shoulders. He wandered around the camp for a few minutes noting the arrangement of everything, then took his fishing rod and went off to fish in a lake near by. Several times afterwards he died and came to life again, but at last he died and never recovered. (1)

There are numerous tales of this nature. A man named Okalluk died and was laid out by his relatives in the usual manner, wrapped in a deerskin. Four days afterwards he came to life again, cut the lashings of his deerskin wrappings and followed the trail

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"1. Cf. Stefansson, Anthrop. Papers, A.M.N.H., Vol. XIV, pt. I, p. 222."

of his kinsmen, whom he found fishing in a lake. They laid hands on him and conveyed him to one of their tents, where the shamans held a seance and restored him to health again. Again in Bathurst inlet a woman named Allanak died one winter and was laid out on the sleeping platform of her hut, covered over with skins; she too came to life again five days later and regained her usual strength. In the same region Inernek or Ikpak-usaluk, for the man had two names, fell ill, and was left in his house [174] supposedly dead. He recovered after seven days and became in consequence a very famous shaman. There is also a story of a native named Iyillik who announced that he would die and recover at the end of four days, but when his people laid him out on top of a rock an animal with the body of a wolf and the head of a polar bear came and devoured his corpse; so his prophecy came to naught. Strangest of all is the tale of Akarak, a Kil-usiktok Eskimo. A spirit or the malignant shade of a dead man struck him on the nape of the neck while he was hunting south of Bathurst inlet. He fell dead into a swamp and his face was buried in the water. There at sunset his son found him; his face was blue, his hands were frozen stiff and his body was cold and dead. The son caught hold of his ring finger with one hand and extended the arm, then laid his other hand on Akarak's shoulder. Forthwith the latter's soul returned to his body and he was restored to life

again. Then his son tied his quiver round him and helped him to his feet. Stiff and sore he staggered home, leaning on the younger man's shoulder. As soon as they arrived in camp the shamans invoked their magic powers and restored the hunter to health again. Akarak had been a fairly powerful shaman before this adventure, the natives said, but afterwards his prestige was greatly augmented."

5: Jenness--80A (1913-16) 1924 Copper Eskimo
116, 539, 761, 773

"THE ORIGIN OF DEATH
(Told by Ilatsiaq)

In the first days no one died upon the earth. Now there was a family dwelling inland in the country of Kigliniq one summer. As winter came on they dropped down to the coast, where they wandered about from place to place, without food, until at last the woman dropped in her tracks and died. She became a hill which now bears the name of Uvaiyoq. The father and the two boys went on a little farther, then the boys also dropped down and died, one after the other, becoming two hills which are called Uvaiyokuk. Finally the man himself dropped down, and the hill into which he was converted is known as Uvaiyuluaq. On its sides one can still discern his ribs. These four hills lie close to the shore in the country of Kigliniq, and are recognisable by their precipitous faces. (1)

This family was the first to perish. Other Eskimos in the same country went to a fishing lake named Ariaq. There, desperate with hunger, they killed and ate each other. In this way they all perished. But at another lake, Eqaluktutsiaq, a short distance away, there were some other families, and one of the natives managed to shoot

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"1. Probably they are the hills marked on the chart behind Wilbank bay on the south coast of Victoria island."

a lcon with his bow and arrows. This was divided up amongst the people, but so many were they that the bird had to be cut at every joint in order that everyone might receive a tiny morsel. However, it saved their lives."

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

Johansen, who wore an imperial, and I, who trimmed my beard once a week with a pair of No. o clippers, were quite elderly. They asked me at last whether the two former were not my sons. I gravely assured them they were not mine, but Johansen's. 123

Nothing disturbed the harmony of our relations until some natives from the settlement near the Liston and Sutton Islands reported that one of their young men had died a short time before, and openly accused me of his murder. They could not charge me with physical violence, for I was a hundred miles away on the Coppermine River at the time of his decease; but they said that I had stolen his soul by magic, and deliberately withheld it until his body pined away and died. Foolish as this accusation seemed, we could not blind ourselves to its seriousness. The Eskimos knew nothing of our law or of the police. Their own penalty for murder was assassination, unless the relatives of the dead man agreed to accept a heavy blood-price. They might not have dared to apply this penalty to me, because trading would cease immediately and my well-armed party make reprisals. But no one could say what would happen. Certainly it was not safe for me to wander in and out of their huts as freely as before; some hot-headed individual might forget discretion and stab me in the back as I crawled through a low doorway. 123 761 123 627

In spite of the preponderating sentiment against [756]

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

the mother furnished its nourishment from her own breast. Can we blame her if sometimes she shrank from the burden? Often she had no choice. It was physically impossible for her to raise twins, or children born within two years of one another; and there were no hospitals or infants' homes to which she could turn for aid. Surely it was kinder to stifle the infant in its first hour of extra-uterine life, before it knew pain or hunger, or could awaken by its cries and smiles the tender love that as yet lay sleeping in the mother's heart!

Life was so full of hardships and dangers that the average expectation was low. The young might laugh and play their innocent games, but the days passed quickly and the Great Dark was never far remote. Often, as we planned for the months to come, Ikpuck or Icehouse added in a tone of resignation, "If we still live." What lay beyond the Darkness no one knew. Even the legends contradicted one another; one version proclaimed that the dead had their home in the moon, another that they haunted this lower world, though invisible to human eyes. Whatever their fate, it held no promise of joy, no hope of reunion with kinsmen who had gone before. The only pleasures were here and now, and the wise man grasped them before they passed from his reach for ever. Death, when it beckoned, he faced with equanimity; if it

29: Jenness E-5 (1914-1916) 1959
ND8 Copper Eskimo ND8

761 deprived him of further pleasures, it also released him from manifold pains. So the Eskimos conceived no harm either to themselves or to the babe in quenching its new-born life, whenever that life seemed destined to bring only hardship and distress.

858 168 Life was sweet, nevertheless, and the natives did not desire the suicide of their race. They needed children for their own happiness, to satisfy the instinct for parenthood and to support their declining years; but they needed no more than would maintain their number at an even level. Many mouths were hard to feed; even with their number limited as at present people starved to death at intervals of a few years. To migrate elsewhere was useless, for no country between the four pillars that held up the sky abounded more [224] in fish and game than their own. The best hunter could hardly raise more than three children, unless indeed he was fortunate enough to secure a rifle and ammunition from the white men, and thereby increase his kill of caribou and seal. Perhaps, if they all possessed rifles, they could allow their families to increase. But with only harpoons for seals, and only bows and arrows for caribou, how could they possibly provide for every child that, wanted or unwanted, now came into the light of day?

797 Girling, the missionary, arrived at the station early in February. This was his first winter in the country